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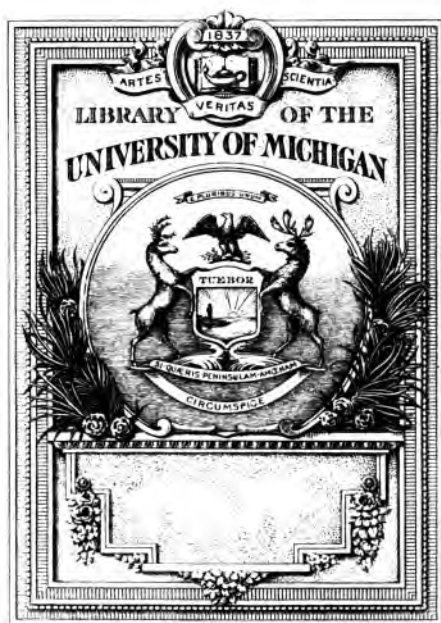
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IN MONTE-CARLO

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Henryk Sienkiewicz





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HENRYK SIENKIEWICZ

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In . . Monte Carlo .

Translated by

S. C. de SOISSONS

From the Original Polish of

HENRYK SIENKIEWICZ

AUTHOR OF

"QUO VADIS,"

"WITH FIRE AND SWORD,"

"THE DELUGE," ETC. ETC.



London

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INTRODUCTION

THE author of *Quo Vadis*, one of the most successful works of fiction published in recent years, or perhaps ever issued—for in one year over 800,000 copies of the English version alone have been sold—is a Pole, and not a Hungarian as some literary and other papers have described him. He is about fifty years old, and last year there was celebrated in his own country the twenty-fifth anniversary of his literary career.

Eleven of his books have been translated from the Polish into the English language for the benefit of the great British reading public—eleven books of masterly, personal and simple prose, which have been received with admiration, for they are works of exceptional ability, full of good things and pure, with all the original humour, nobleness and charm conspicuously and naturally preserved.

Introduction

At the beginning of his life, Sienkiewicz wrote (under the pseudonym of "Litwos") short stories of singular grace and ingenuity. In those early stories the reader will frequently come upon original thoughts on most general problems and topics, combined with much deep observation and criticism of life, expressed in an easy and sincere manner. Many of the tales were successfully translated into different languages, and one of them, "Anthea," was accorded the extraordinary honour of being rendered into Latin and printed in *Vox Urbis*, a fortnightly review published in Rome by the European mandarins—the cardinals and prelates.

In historical trilogy, *The Deluge*, *With Fire and Sword*, and *Pan Michael*, Sienkiewicz's talent shines forth more powerfully than in some of his other efforts. The admirers of romanticism will find in these books historical fiction in its highest form. This fantastically heroic Pole is in the front rank not only of Polish romance writers past or present, but he also stands level with all the great masters of the craft in England, France and Germany.

Introduction

Sienkiewicz, being himself a nobleman, naturally in his historical romances describes the glorious deeds of the Polish nobility, who, having been located on the frontier, so to speak, of the Turks, Cossacks, Tartars and Walachs, have defended Europe for centuries from the invasions of barbarism, and have thus enabled Germany, France, and even England to outstrip Poland in the development of national welfare and material advancement.

In the field of psychology, Sienkiewicz is represented by two problem novels, *Without Dogma* and *Children of the Soil*, whose chief charm lies in the synthesis so seldom realised in fiction, and the admirable beauty of expression employed. The author has a deep and logical knowledge of psychological analysis, which he turns to excellent account in the present story, for herein his heroes are animated by intense personal feeling and egoism, which, though only fictitious, appears less deceitful than real life.

In *Quo Vadis* the whole *alta Roma*, from the slaves carrying mosaics for their refined

Introduction

masters to the patricians who were so enamoured of the beautiful that one of them, for instance, used to kiss at every moment a superb vase, stands before our eyes as if it were reconstructed by a magical power from ruins and death.

Sienkiewicz is a great favourite with the English reading public, at least on the other side of the Atlantic (in England he is not yet appreciated at his real value) for his conception of love. As in most novels, love is the principal subject, it is evident that the way an author understands the passion provides the keynote to the character of his works. In Sienkiewicz's novels the different characters love in different ways, but the ideal of love is always high, noble and pure. He is not of those workers who delight to carry the reader along the doubtful roads of physiology and philosophical pornography. That is why his novels are moral and healthy in tone. At the same time they are psychologically true, for he looks on the people from that point of view which includes the entire gamut of human

Introduction

nature. From all Sienkiewicz's novels is wafted a pure, revivifying and soothing breeze. His work is a manly lyricism as well as epic, deepened by knowledge of life and sustained by lofty thoughts. It is the outpouring of a worker who has travelled along many roads, studied many things and learned much bitterness, who has ridiculed many weaknesses, and has at last perceived that a man to be himself has only only one aim above human affairs—"to spin out love as the silkworm spins its web."

S. C. DE SOISSONS.

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IN MONTE CARLO

CHAPTER I

AN INTERRUPTED PROPOSAL

THE painter Svirski was sitting beside Mrs Elzen in an open carriage, while facing them were her twin children, Romulus and Remus. He was thinking of her and looking at the sea ; for the view and the scenery were worthy of attention.

They were driving from Nice to Monte Carlo, by the road called Old Corniche, which stretches along the rocky shore. On the left the view was cut off by the high rocks, grey and bare ; to the right lay the blue depths of the Mediterranean, looking like a boundless chasm.

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From the heights, as they rode along, the fishermen's small boats looked like white spots, and in the distance it was difficult to distinguish the sails from the seamews that skimmed the water.

Mrs Elzen was leaning on Svirski's shoulder, looking with her dreamy eyes at the mirror-like sea, not seeming to realise what she was doing.

Svirski felt her touch, and a thrill of delight ran through him. He was thinking that but for the presence of Romulus and Remus he would clasp her round the waist and press her to his breast.

At the same time he feared that, should he do so, he could no longer delay, but would be obliged to propose.

At that moment Mrs Elzen said,—

“Will you please stop the carriage?”

Svirski did so, and for a while they were silent.

“How calm it is after the noise

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of Monte Carlo!" said the young widow.

"I can hear only music," answered the painter. "It is probable they are playing on board of an ironclad at Villa Franca."

And, in fact, the same wind which bore the perfume of orange blossoms and heliotrope brought the soft strains of music.

Beneath, one could see the roofs of villas scattered along the shore, nestling in thickets of eucalyptus, with white masses of almond blossom and palms beside them. Lower still was seen the blue waters of Villa Franca Harbour, flooded with sunlight and swarming with large vessels.

The seething life beneath contrasted strangely with the death-like silence of the bare mountains, over which was stretched a cloudless, transparent sky. Here, amid those quiet rocks, all plant-life grew stunted and died. The

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carriage itself seemed to be some kind of bug glued to the rock.

"Here life ends entirely," said Svirski, looking on the bare stones.

Mrs Elzen leaned more heavily on his shoulder, and answered in a sleepy voice,—

"To me it seems to begin again."

Svirski answered her after a while, and with a certain emotion,—

"It may be you are right." And he looked at her tenderly.

Mrs Elzen raised her eyes to his, but soon covered them with her eyelids, as if she were confused. At that moment she looked like a young girl whose eyes cannot bear the first glimmering of love. Then they were both silent, and only the sounds of music rising from below were heard.

In the meanwhile, out on the sea, near the entrance to the harbour, a white cloud of smoke appeared, and then the quiet was broken by Remus, who, jumping from his seat exclaimed,—

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“*Tiens le ‘Formidable’!*”

Mrs Elzen looked angrily at her younger twin. She regretted the intrusion of that moment, in which every word would decide her future.

“Remus,” she said, “keep quiet.”

“*Mais, maman, c’est ‘Formidable’!*”

“What a dreadful boy!”

“*Pourquoi?*”

“He is stupid, but this time he is right,” said Romulus. “Yesterday we were in Villa Franca, and they told us that the whole squadron was here except the *Formidable*, which they expected to-day.”

To this Remus answered, with a stress on the last syllable,—

“You are stupid yourself!”

Then they began to fight. Mrs Elzen knew how disgusted Svirski was with the way the boys were being brought up, and with their French, which they used continually. She ordered them to be quiet, and then said,—

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"I told you, as well as Mr Kresovich, that you must not speak any other language than Polish."

Kresovich was a student from Zurich, and was in a consumption. Mrs Elzen found him at the Riviera and engaged him as tutor for her children, after she had met Svirski, owing chiefly to the satirical remark of Mr Viadrovski that "respectable families do not educate children to be travelling salesmen!"

After a while the carriage, rattling over the stones, moved on.

"It was you who asked me to bring them with us," said Mrs Elzen, in a sweet voice. "You are too kind to them; but we must come here some moonlight night. Will you come?"

"Every time you wish me to," answered Svirski. "There is no moon to-night, and you will be late for your dinner."

"That is true," said Mrs Elzen; "but will you tell me when it will be full

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moon? What a pity I did not ask you to dine with me alone! During the moonlight it must be charming here, although to-night my heart palpitates very much. If you could only know how it is throbbing just now! Look at my pulse; one can see it even through the glove."

And she showed her hand, clad in a very neat glove, and offered it to Svirski. He took it in both his hands and looked.

"I can't see it," said he, "but I shall be able to hear it."

And, bending his head, he placed his ear on the buttons of the glove, pressed the hand closely to his face, then kissed it, and said,—

"When I was a lad I used to catch birds, and their hearts throbbed in exactly the same way. Your pulse is like a captive bird."

She smiled, almost sadly, and repeated,—

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"Like a captive bird?" After a while she asked, "What did you do with the captive birds?"

"I was very much attached to them, but they always flew away."

"Bad birds!"

The painter proceeded with a certain emotion,—

"It always happened that way in my life. I searched in vain for a bird that would like to remain with me; finally I lost even hope."

"No! You must keep that," answered Mrs Elzen.

Here the painter said to himself that, as this thing began so long ago, it must be finished as it pleased God. At that moment he seemed like a man who stuffs his fingers into his ears and covers his eyes with his hands when he is about to plunge; but he felt that it must be done, and that there was no time for reflection.

"Would you not prefer to take a

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walk?" he asked. "The carriage can follow us, and then we shall have more freedom for talking."

"Very well," said Mrs Elzen, with determination.

Svirski touched the coachman with his stick; the carriage stopped, and they alighted. Romulus and Remus rushed forward, throwing stones over the precipice, while Svirski and Mrs Elzen remained behind. But evidently there was some ill fate hanging over them that day, for before they could take advantage of the moment, they perceived a cavalier, followed by a groom, coming from Monaco, stop where Romulus and Remus were playing.

"It is De Sinten," said Mrs Elzen, impatiently.

"Yes, I recognise him."

In fact, they noticed the head of the horse, and above it the horse-like face of young Baron de Sinten. He hesitated before approaching, but evidently thought

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that if they had wished to be alone they would not have taken the boys with them; so he jumped from his horse, and handing the reins to his groom, greeted them with a bow.

"How do you do," said Mrs Elzen, a little dryly. "It's your hour?"

"Yes. In the morning I shoot pigeons with Wilkisey; therefore, I cannot ride, as it might disturb my pulse. I have seven pigeons more than he already. Do you know that the *Formidable* is coming to Villa Franca to-day, and that the admiral gives a ball on board the day after to-morrow?"

"We saw her coming in."

"I was just going to Villa Franca to see an officer—a friend of mine; but it's too late now. If you will permit me, I will return with you to Monte Carlo."

Mrs Elzen assented by a nod of her head, and they walked on together.

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Sinten, being a horseman by vocation, immediately began to talk about his hunter, which he had been riding.

"I purchased him from Waxdorf," he said. "Waxdorf lost in *trente et quarante* and was in need of money. He played on *inverse* and had met with a series of six, but then the cards changed." Then he turned to his horse, saying, "Pure Irish blood, and I bet my neck there is no better hunter in all Corniche, only he is difficult to mount."

"Is he balky?" asked Svirski.

"Once on his back he is as gentle as a child. He is already accustomed to me, but you could not mount him."

Svirski, who in matters of sport was very vain, said,—

"Why not?"

"Better not brag—at least, not here on the precipice," exclaimed Mrs Elzen.

But Svirski was already by the horse, and in the twinkling of an eye was

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sitting in the saddle, without any resistance on the part of the horse, which, though perhaps capricious, evidently thought it better not to cut any fancy capers on the precipice.

The horse and rider in a short gallop disappeared at the turn of the road.

"He is sitting quite well," said the baron, "but he will spoil my horse. To speak truly, there are no roads here for riding."

"Your horse proved to be very quiet," said Mrs Elzen.

"I am glad of it, as I was afraid there would be an accident."

On his face, however, there was a look of embarrassment; in the first place, because what he said about the difficulty in mounting the horse looked like a lie; and besides there was a certain antipathy between him and Svirski.

It is true that De Sinten had never had any serious plans in regard to Mrs

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Elzen, but he preferred that no one should interfere with those he held. Besides, a few days before there had been some bitter words exchanged between him and Svirski. The baron, being an absolute aristocrat, once said, during a dinner at Mrs Elzen's hotel, that, "according to his opinion, the man begins with a baron." To that Svirski, who was in bad humour, asked, "On which side?" The young man took this question very much to heart, and began to consult Mr Viadrovski and Counsellor Kladzki as to how he should act. Then he learned, to his great astonishment, that Svirski had a princely crown in his coat-of-arms. The knowledge of Svirski's extraordinary strength, and his skill in the use of pistols, pacified the baron's nerves in such a way that the angry words only left a feeling of dislike in both hearts.

The painter, however, felt it the more of the two. Nobody thought that the

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affair would end in matrimony, but among acquaintances they began to talk of his sentiment for Mrs Elzen. On his part, he suspected that De Sinten and his companion were laughing at him. It is true they did not betray themselves by even one word, but, just the same, Svirski thought so, and he resented it, principally for Mrs Elzen's sake.

Therefore he was glad that, thanks to the peaceful disposition of the horse, De Sinten appeared to be a man who, even without any reason, would say things not true; so, on his return, he said,—

“A very good horse; and he is good because he is as quiet as a lamb.”

Then he dismounted, and they walked on together.

Mrs Elzen, in order to get rid of De Sinten, began to talk about art, of which the young sportsman had not even the slightest idea. But he preferred to tell them the gossip of the gambling estab-

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lishment; and he also congratulated her on the good luck she had had last night. She listened with constraint, being ashamed to be reminded before Svirski that she had participated in the game. Her embarrassment increased all the more when Romulus said,—

“*Maman*, you told us you would never gamble. Give each of us a louis to play, will you?”

She answered, as if not talking to anyone in particular,—

“I was looking for Counsellor Kladzki to invite him to dinner to-day; then we enjoyed a little game.”

“Give each of us a louis,” repeated Romulus.

“Or buy us a small roulette table,” added Remus.

“Don’t tease me. Let us go to the carriage. *Au revoir*, Monsieur de Sinten.”

“At seven?”

“At seven.”

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Then they separated, and a short while after Svirski again found himself sitting beside the beautiful widow; but this time they were occupying the front seat, as they wished to look at the sunset.

"They say that Monte Carlo is better sheltered than Mentone," said the widow; "but how it tires me!—this continual noise, the movement, and the acquaintances one must unwillingly make. Sometimes I wish I could run away from here and spend the rest of the winter in some quiet corner where I should only see people whom I like. Which place do you like the best?"

"I like St Raphael very much."

"Yes, but it is so far from Nice," she answered in a soft voice, "and you have your studio in Nice."

A moment of silence followed; then Mrs Elzen asked again,—

"How about Antibes?"

"That's true. I had almost forgotten Antibes."

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"It is so near Nice. You must stay after dinner; then we can decide which will be the best place to go to."

He looked into the depths of her eyes, and asked,—

"Would you truly like to escape from the people?"

"Let us speak frankly," she answered. "In your question I feel a doubt. You suspect that I am talking in order to show myself better, or, at least, less superficial, than I am. You are right to think that way, for you see me in the whirlpool of society continually. But I will say that very often one follows a certain movement only for the reason that one is pushed in that direction against one's will and must bear the consequences of one's previous life. As for me, it may be that there is in me the feebleness of a woman who, without somebody's help, lacks energy. Granted. But it does not prevent me

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from longing very sincerely for some peaceful corner and a quiet life. People may say what they please, but we women are like climbing plants—when they cannot climb they crawl on the ground; therefore men are often mistaken in thinking we crawl voluntarily. By this crawling I mean merely an empty life with no higher aspirations. But how can I defend myself from it? Somebody asks his friend for an introduction to me; then he pays me a visit—the second—does the same, and so on. What can I do? Refuse him? On what ground? Therefore I invite, but only for this reason, that the more people I have in my drawing-room the more they make themselves indifferent to me, and in that way nobody can get an exclusive position.”

“You are right in that,” said Svirski.

“You see, in that way there is created a stream of worldly life of which I cannot get rid of alone, and which

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often tires and disgusts me so much that I almost cry from weariness."

"I believe you," said the painter.

"You ought to believe me; but you must believe this also—I am better and less frivolous than I appear. When any doubts arise, or when people talk of me, you must think that I possess some good qualities. If you will not think that way I shall be very unhappy."

"I give you my word that I always prefer to think the kindest of you."

"It ought to be so," she answered in a soft voice; "because, even if everything that is good in me were deadened, it would be regenerated in your company. It depends so much with whom one lives. I would like to say something, but I am afraid."

"Tell me!"

"But you must not accuse me of being excited, or of anything worse. I am talking as a well-balanced woman, who states only that which exists, though

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wondering a little at the fact. Well then, with you I find my perverse soul all quiet and sunny, the same as when I was a young girl, although to-day I am an old woman. I am thirty-five years of age."

Svirski looked at her with a beaming, almost enamoured face; then he slowly raised her hand to his lips, after which he said,—

"Ah! beside me you are still a young girl, for I am forty-eight—there is my picture." Saying this, he pointed with his finger at the sunset.

And she looked toward that light, which found reflection in her radiant eyes; then she spoke softly, as to herself,—

"Great, marvellous, dear sun!"

Then followed a silence, while a quiet, reddish light fell on their faces. It was the "great and marvellous sun" which was setting, and underneath it the light, transparent clouds shone like gold.

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Near the shore the sea was plunged in shadow, but farther away on the deep there was a great gleam, while beneath, on the lilac background of the air, the motionless cypresses stood out.

CHAPTER II

MRS ELZEN AT HOME

THE guests invited by Mrs Elzen gathered at the Hôtel de Paris at seven o'clock in the evening. She had been provided with a separate dining-room, with a small drawing-room attached, in which the coffee was served after dinner. The lady announced "an informal affair," but the men did not know what to think about it, and they came in evening dress and white cravats. The hostess was dressed in a pale pink, low-cut dress, and looked quite young and fresh with her delicate face and small head which so enchanted Svirski. Her ample shoulders were white and transparent, like mother-of-pearl, while from her eyes beamed the happiness which she felt.

Among the guests, besides Svirski and

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the Baron de Sinten, were the old Counsellor Kladzki, with his nephew Sigismond, a young nobleman, not very polished but very audacious, whose eyes shone over brightly while looking at Mrs Elzen ; the Prince Valerian Porecki, a man of forty years, with a large face, bald head, and the pointed skull of an Aztec ; Mr Viadrovski, rich and malicious, owner of petroleum wells in Galicia, art amateur and *dilettante* ; and Kresovich, a student and temporary tutor of Romulus and Remus. Mrs Elzen had invited him because Svirski liked his "fanatical face," as he used to put it.

The young hostess had always wished, and now wished more than ever, to have, as she expressed it, an "intellectual salon." But in the beginning she could not turn the conversation from local gossip and incidents of the gambling house, which Viadrovski called "Slav," reasoning that one could hear more Slav spoken there than any other language.

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Viadrovski spent his time in Monte Carlo laughing at his own countrymen and other younger Slav brothers. It was his hobby; therefore he began to relate that two days ago he had seen in the Cercle de la Méditerranée, at six o'clock in the morning, only seven people, and all were Slavs.

“We were born that way,” said he, turning to the hostess. “Other people count thus—Nine, ten, eleven, twelve, etc.; but every true Slav will say—Nine, ten, jack, queen, king.”

To that the prince with the pointed skull pronounced, with the voice of a man who discovers unknown facts, that every abused passion is perilous, but that many distinguished foreigners whose acquaintance is valuable and useful belong to the Cercle de la Méditerranée. One can serve one's country everywhere. Three days ago he met an Englishman there, Mr Chamberlain's friend, and this Englishman asked him about Poland;

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and he, the prince, wrote him, on a visiting-card, the political and economic situation in general and the social aspiration in particular. This card most assuredly will reach, if not Mr Chamberlain's hands, because he is not here, at least Lord Salisbury's, which will be still better. Probably they will meet Lord Salisbury at the ball which the French admiral is going to give. During this ball the *Formidable* will be lighted *à giorno* with electricity.

Kresovich, who was not only consumptive, but also a man who belonged to the red party, and hated the society in which, being the tutor of Romulus and Remus, he was obliged to live, began to laugh sneeringly, like a hyena, on hearing about the visiting-card. Mrs Elzen, not wishing to pay any attention to him, said,—

“At any rate, people here do marvels. I hear that the whole way from Nice to Marseilles will be lighted by electricity.”

“The engineer Ducloz was preparing

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such a plan," said Svirski, "but he died a couple of months ago. He was such an enthusiastic electrician that in his will he asked to have his tomb lighted by electricity."

"On his tombstone," said Viadrovski, "he ought to have the inscription, 'Eternal rest give him, O Lord, and may electricity light him for aye and aye. Amen!'"

But the old counsellor scolded him for joking on serious things; then he attacked the whole Riviera. Everything at the place is pretext and humbug, beginning with the people and ending with things. Everywhere one meets marquises, counts and viscounts, but one must look out that they do not steal one's handkerchief from one's pocket. It is the same with comfort; in one of his rooms in his estate one could put five such small rooms as the one they gave him in the hotel. The doctors sent him to Nice to get fresh air, and the Promenade des

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Anglais smells like a Jewish backyard—his nephew Sigismond can testify to it. But Sigismond's eyes were looking at Mrs Elzen's shoulders, and he did not hear anything.

"You must go to Bordighiera," said Svirski. "The Italian dirt is artistic at least."

"But you are living in Nice just the same."

"Because I can't find a studio on the other side of Ventimigli. But if I changed, I should go to Antibes."

Here he looked at Mrs Elzen, who smiled and lowered her eyes.

After a while, however, wishing to give an artistic tendency to the conversation, she began to talk of Rumpelmayer's exhibition and about some new pictures she had seen two days ago, which the French journalist Krauss called *impressionistico-decadants*. Viadrovski raised his voice and asked, with the tone of Pyrron,—

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“Who are *decadants* anyhow?”

“One might say,” answered Svirski, “that they are people who prefer the different sauces, with which art is served, to art itself.”

But the Prince Porecki was vexed at Kladzki's opinion of marquises, counts and viscounts. “Even the rascals coming here belong to the higher species of rascals, and they are not satisfied with stealing a handkerchief. One can meet great pirates here. But besides these, the most refined and richest people come here, and it is very proper that the bankers meet the nobility, because in that way the world becomes polished! Mr Kladzki ought to read novels like *Idylle Tragique*, and he would persuade himself that, besides suspicious characters, one meets those of the highest social order here—such as will be met with on the *Formidable*.”

They began to talk about *Idylle Tragique*. Young Kladzki, speaking

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of the hero of that novel, remarked that he was stupid in giving up a woman for a friend, and that he, Kladzki, would not do it—not for ten friends—but would for his own brother. Viadrovski interrupted him, French novels being his other hobby.

“What makes me angry,” said he, “is this selling of dyed foxes for natural ones. If those gentlemen are realists they must write the truth. Have they paid any attention to their heroines? The tragedy begins by the lady fighting with herself and continuing to struggle most dreadfully through half the volume; and from the first page I know, upon my word, how it will end. How tedious it is, and how often it is repeated. I admit that fast women must be tolerated, and that they have a certain right to literature also; but they must not sell me a fast woman for a tragical princess, when I know that such souls have had lovers before the tragedy began and will

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have them again after it ends. They will struggle again as before, and everything will finish in the same way. What a falsehood, what an atrophy of moral sense and the sense of truth! And to think that those farces of boudoirs are read, received in our country as good merchandise, and accepted as if they were dramas—and are taken quite seriously! In that way the difference between the honest woman and the fast woman diminishes, and the right of citizenship is given to cuckoos which do not have their own nests. Then such a French gilding is put on our dolls, that they do anything under the flag of such authors! In such books there are neither principles, characters, sentiment of duty nor moral sense—nothing but false aspirations—a psychological conundrum!”

Viadrovski was too intelligent not to understand that in talking in that way he was throwing a stone at Mrs Elzen ;

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but he was a thoroughly malicious man, and he spoke thus on purpose. Mrs Elzen listened to his words with considerable dissatisfaction, although there was much truth in his speech. Svirski was anxious to answer him sharply, but he perceived that it would not be proper to take Viadrovski's words as if he had referred to someone personally; therefore he preferred to treat the whole matter from another point of view.

"As for me," said he, "I have noticed that in French novels all women are sterile. Elsewhere, when two people are in love, in a legitimate or illegitimate way, the consequence of their love is a child; but here nobody has children. How strange it is! And that is for this simple reason that those gentlemen who write the novels think that love can remain unpunished."

"Such society! such literature!" answered old Kladzki. "It is known

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that the population is diminishing in France. Among the higher classes a child is rare!"

"But it is more comfortable and more elegant," said De Sinten.

Kresovich, who had before sneered, now said,—

"It is the literature of a slothful people, and it must perish with them."

"What do you say?" asked De Sinten.

The student turned his passionate face to him.

"I say it is a literature of a slothful people."

"Every class of people has its duty and its pleasures," said the prince. "I have two passions—politics and photography."

The dinner was almost ended, and a quarter of an hour later they all passed to the little drawing-room, where coffee was served. Mrs Elzen lighted a thin cigarette, and leaning comfortably in an arm-chair, crossed her feet. It seemed

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to her that a certain nonchalance ought to please Svirski, who was an artist and a Bohemian.

But as she was comparatively short and had large hips, in the act of crossing her feet her dress was raised too high. Young Kladzki immediately dropped a handkerchief and began to search on the floor, for at heart he was a cad ; he was looking for it so long that his uncle was obliged to whisper to him angrily,—

“What are you thinking of? Have some decency about you.”

The young nobleman stretched himself and whispered back,—

“That’s the trouble, that I don’t know where I am.”

Mrs Elzen knew by experience that even well-bred men, when they have the smallest opportunity, become rough, especially in the presence of women without protection. This time, it is true, she did not see young Kladzki’s movement, but having noticed the disdainful

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and almost cynical smile with which he answered his uncle, she was sure he was talking about her. And she felt a contempt for all the company, with the exception of Svirski and Kresovich, whom she suspected of being in love with her, notwithstanding his hatred of women of her social rank. But she almost had an attack of hysterics that evening on account of Viadrovski's talk, because it seemed he wished to poison every spoonful of coffee she took, in exchange for her good dinner. He spoke generally and apparently objectively about women, not overstepping the limits of decency; but at the bottom of his talk there was not only cynicism but also plenty of allusions to Mrs Elzen's character and social standing, and those allusions were offensive and very unpleasant, especially in Svirski's presence, who suffered very much on that account.

Therefore a load was lifted from her

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heart when finally the guests departed and the painter alone remained.

“Ah!” she exclaimed, breathing freely, “I feel the beginning of a headache!”

“Have they tired you?”

“Yes, yes; more than that!”

“Why do you invite them?”

As if unable to control her nerves, she approached him feverishly.

“Sit down and do not move! I don’t know—perhaps you will think ill of me, but I need it like medicine. That way! To remain that way with an honest man! That way!”

Having said this, she sat beside him, put her head on his shoulder and closed her eyes.

“Yes, only a moment that way! only a moment!”

Suddenly her eyelids were moistened with tears, but she pressed Svirski’s lips with her finger in order to prevent him from speaking.

His heart throbbed, for he was almost

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as soft as wax when he saw a woman crying. He was pleased with the confidence she placed in him. He understood that the decisive moment had come ; therefore, encircling her waist with his arm, he said,—

“Remain with me for ever ; give me the right to protect you.”

Mrs Elzen did not answer ; but from her eyes rolled big, quiet tears.

“Be mine,” repeated Svirski.

Then she placed her hand on his other shoulder and nestled to him as a child nestles to its mother.

And Svirski, bending down, kissed her forehead ; then he began to kiss away her tears, and gradually the flame of love seized him. After a while he took her in his arms, pressed her to his breast, and touched her mouth with his lips.

But she defended herself.

“No ! no !” she said breathlessly ; “you are not like the others. No ! no ! Have mercy !”

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Svirski held her in his arms ; at that moment he was exactly like the others, but, happily for Mrs Elzen, a soft knocking at the door was heard. They separated immediately, jumping in opposite directions.

"Who is there?" asked Mrs Elzen, impatiently.

Kresovich's gloomy face appeared in the doorway.

"Excuse me," said he, with trembling voice ; "Romulus is coughing, and I am afraid he has the fever. I thought it best to let you know about it."

Svirski arose.

"Shall I go for a doctor?"

But Mrs Elzen had already recovered her coolness.

"No, thank you," she said ; "if it be necessary we can send someone from the hotel ; but first I must see the child. Excuse me, but I must go to him, poor boy. Therefore, until to-morrow!"

Saying this, she stretched out her

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hand to him, and Svirski raised it to his mouth.

“Until to-morrow and every day ;
au revoir !”

Mrs Elzen, now alone with Kresovich, looked at him inquiringly.

“What is the matter with Romulus ?”

He became still paler, and answered almost roughly,—

“Nothing !”

“What do you mean ?” she asked, frowning.

“It means that you must chase me out, as I am going mad !” And he went out.

Mrs Elzen stood for a while with the lightning of anger in her eyes and with frowning eyebrows, but gradually her brows smoothed. In fact, she was thirty-five years old, and here was a new proof that even now nobody could resist her charms.

After a while she approached the mirror, as if looking for confirmation of that thought.

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Meanwhile Svirski was returning to Nice in an empty railroad car, continually raising his hands, which were scented with heliotrope, to his face. He felt uneasy, though happy, and the blood rushed to his head when he recalled Mrs Elzen's favourite perfume.

CHAPTER III

THE NEXT MORNING

THE next day, however, when he awoke, his head was heavy, as though he had spent the night in drinking, and there was a great uneasiness in his heart. When daylight falls upon theatrical scenery, then that which during the evening looked enchanting appears to be a daub. The same effect occurs in life. Svirski had not met with anything unexpected. He knew that he was drifting toward what had happened the previous night, and that he must eventually reach it; but now when everything was ended an incomprehensible fear seized him. He thought yesterday that he could retreat, but to-day it was too late. In vain he repeated to himself that there was no time for reasoning. The different objec-

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tions to Mrs Elzen, which he had made to himself, and especially in regard to marriage with her, returned to his mind. The voice which before had constantly whispered into his ear, "Don't be an ass!" now began to shout, "You are an ass!" And he could silence it neither by argument, nor by repeating, "It is done!" because common sense told him that he had done a stupid thing, and the cause of it was his own feebleness.

And at this thought he was ashamed. Were he a youngster, he could excuse himself by his lack of age. Had he just met this lady on the Riviera, and heard nothing about her, he might also be justified. It is true he had seen her seldom, but he had heard everything about her, for in Warsaw they talked more about her than about anybody else. They called her the "Monster-wife," and the local gossips used to sharpen their witty tongues on her as a knife is sharpened on a stone; which, however,

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did not stop men from crowding to her drawing-room.

The women, although more hostile to her, received her also, on account of the numerous connections by which she was linked to society people. Some of them, especially those to whose interest it was that public opinion should not be too severe, even defended the beautiful widow. Others, less indulgent, did not dare to close the door against her, because they did not wish to be the first to do so. A certain local play-writer, hearing someone call Mrs Elzen a "demi-monde," said that she was neither "the whole world nor half a world, but rather three-quarters of an hour of the world." But, as in larger cities everything rough is smoothed over, so Mrs Elzen's situation was *smoothed* also. Her friends used to say, "It's true that one cannot ask from Helene extraordinary virtues; but she has her good qualities." And unknowingly they

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granted her the right to be more free than others. Sometimes they suggested that before her husband's death she had not lived with him for several years; sometimes they muttered that she was bringing up Romulus and Remus to be clowns, or that she did not care about them at all. Were Mrs Elzen less beautiful and less rich no one would have paid any attention to such malicious remarks. But the men did not restrain themselves in their conversation about her. Even those who were in love with her attacked her through jealousy; the only silent one being he who would like to appear to be more lucky than the others.

In general, however, the malignity went so far that it was said that Mrs Elzen had one lover for her sojourn in the city during the winter, and another for the summer season. Svirski knew all about this. He knew even more than others, because a certain

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Mrs Bronish, with whom he was acquainted in Warsaw, being a good friend of the beautiful widow, told him about some serious accident to Mrs Elzen which was followed by a long illness. "God only knows how terribly poor Helene suffered, and it must be that in mercy it came beforehand, in order to preserve her from greater moral sufferings!" It is true that Svirski supposed that this "serious accident" was purely a lie, but at any rate it was impossible for him to have any illusions about Mrs Elzen, or at least he could not believe she was a woman to whom one could safely trust his happiness.

Just the same, all this news excited his curiosity and attracted him towards her. Having heard of her sojourn in Monte Carlo, he wished to meet her and know her better. As an artist he wished also to see for himself the charm by which this

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woman, so generally slandered, bewitched men.

At first he experienced only disillusion. She was beautiful and sensually attractive, but he noticed that she lacked kindness and good-will towards people. Men interested her only so far as they stood in some relation to her—were necessary to her. Beyond that she was as indifferent as a stone. Svirski did not notice in her any admiration for intellectual life, for literature, for art. She took from it what was necessary to her, giving nothing reciprocally. And he, an artist and a thinking man, understood perfectly that such a state of the soul betrays a barbarous and gross nature, notwithstanding all outward and refined appearances. He had known such women before. He knew that they dominated people by a certain strength, produced by determination and a large, absolute egotism. About such beings he had often heard it said, "She

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is cold but intelligent." But he always thought of such women with disdain. According to his judgment they were a species destitute of higher culture, and even common sense, because the common sense which wants all for itself and grants nothing to others is the attribute possessed chiefly by animals. Equally in Mrs Elzen, as well as in Romulus and Remus, he saw the type in which culture begins and ends at the skin, leaving untouched the plebeian and rougher depths. Besides that he was shocked by her cosmopolitanism. In fact, she was like a worn-out piece of money—it was difficult to distinguish to what country she belonged; Svirski was disgusted with it, not only because he looked differently on that question, but also as a man acquainted with really good society, and knowing that the best people in England, France and Italy looked with disdain on those Nicean-cosmopolite waving weeds without roots.

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Viadrovski was right in saying that Romulus and Remus were being brought up as travelling salesmen or like porters in big hotels. It was well known that Mrs Elzen's father had a title, also that her grandfather was an overseer; and it appeared to Svirski, who possessed an appreciation of the ridiculous in a high degree, perfectly comical that the grandsons of an overseer did not speak good Polish. They were good-looking boys, even very good-looking. Svirski, however, with his fine artistic sense, felt that in those two bird-like skulls and bird-like faces the beauty was not one inherited for generations, but something accidental, some physiological accident. In vain he said to himself that their mother was also beautiful; a feeling always remained in him that the beauty did not belong either to the mother or to the sons, and that they were parvenus pecuniarily as well as morally and physically. But longer

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contact with them weakened those impressions.

From the beginning of their acquaintance, Mrs Elzen was immediately attracted towards him, and she preferred him to others. She had understood that he was worth more than her other acquaintances ; he had a good name, he was rich and famous. It is true he was not young, but she was thirty-five too ; besides that, his herculean strength could replace his youth. Finally, to marry him meant the recovery of honour and moral position to the woman of whom people talked sneeringly.

True enough, she could see that it would be difficult to capture him, but she knew that he was good, and, like every artist, had a certain amount of *naïveté* at the bottom of his soul ; therefore Mrs Elzen calculated that she would be able to bend him towards her. And she was guided not only by pure calculation ; in a measure he

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let himself be attracted ; he attracted her also. And at last she believed that she was in love with him—she was sure of it.

With him happened that which happens to many intelligent men. His common sense ended the moment his senses began to speak ; and, worse still, he went into their service, and instead of fighting them he was obliged to furnish them with arguments. In that way Svirski, who knew and understood everything, began to justify and to defend her, to be indulgent, generous to certain things.

“It’s true,” he said to himself, “that neither her character nor her conduct has until now given any guarantee, but who will prove to me that she is not tired of her present mode of existence, and that she is not longing with her whole soul after serious life ? Without any doubt, in her conduct there is much coquetry, but who will guarantee that she does not display this coquetry because she

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loves me sincerely? It is childish to imagine that a woman of her kind does not possess any good qualities. Ah! the human soul—what a mixture! Only opportunities are necessary that the good qualities may be developed and the bad disappear. Mrs Elzen is no longer young. How stupid it would be to admit that there is no voice in her speaking to her about a virtuous, quiet life, about peace, about tranquillity! Precisely on account of these reasons such a woman may better appreciate an honest man who guarantees her all these things.”

Especially this last argument appeared to him very just and deep. Previously common sense had told him that Mrs Elzen wished to catch him, but he answered now, “She is right, because of every one — even the most ideal woman—who wishes to unite with a man she loves, one might say that she wishes to catch him.”

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The hope of having children tranquillised him in regard to the future. He thought that then she would have someone to love, and she would be obliged to break with the frivolous society life, for she would not then have time—and before the children would have grown up her youth would be passed, and home life would attract her more than the world. Finally he said to himself, “I must live before old age comes; I shall spend a few years with a beautiful, interesting woman, with whom every day will be a holiday to me.”

And those “few years” were in fact the principal attraction for him. It is true that to Mrs Elzen there was something humiliating in the fact that he was not afraid of anything only for the reason that she was no longer young, and therefore the possibility would soon pass away. But he did not admit to himself that, strictly speaking, that thought was the foundation of his

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hope—and he deceived himself, as people always do in whom common sense becomes the servant of the passions.

Notwithstanding all these reasonings, he awakened with an uneasiness and disgust. He could not resist thinking two things. In the first place, that if someone had told him a month ago that he would propose to Mrs Elzen, he would have looked upon him as an idiot ; then, that the charm of the friendship with her, which consisted in uncertainty, in mutual guessing of looks and thoughts, in unfinished words, in suspended avowals and reciprocal attraction, was stronger than the one which was the consequence of the present situation. It was more agreeable to Svirski to anticipate the betrothal than to become affianced, and just now he was thinking that if his pleasure in becoming a husband should grow less in the same proportion as the pleasure of being affianced had diminished,

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then the deuce take such a life! There were moments in which the thought that he was bound, and that, willing or not, he would be obliged to take Mrs Elzen, with Romulus and Remus, in his boat of life, appeared to him almost unbearable. In those moments, being a loyal man, he did not curse Mrs Elzen, but he cursed Romulus and Remus—their bird-like, narrow heads and bird-like skulls.

“I had my sorrows, but, in fact, I was as free as a bird, and could put my whole soul into pictures,” he said to himself, “and now the devil knows how it will be!”

Here the sorrows of the painter spoiled his humour altogether, although they gave another direction to his thoughts. Mrs Elzen and the whole matrimonial affair began to retreat into the background, and the picture “Dream and Death” came out to the foreground. He had been painting

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this picture several months, and he considered it of great importance, because he proposed by it to protest against the generally-accepted idea of death. Often in conversation with his friends, Svirski was vehement against the Christianity which introduced the skeleton into life and art as a representation of death. To Svirski it appeared outrageous. The Greeks imagined Thanatos as a genius with wings, and they were right. What can be more ugly and more frightful than a skeleton? Christians, at least, who see in death the gate to a new life, ought not to have painted it in that way. According to Svirski, this idea was born of the gloomy German spirit, the same which developed the majestic, grand, Gothic style, but which is so depressing, as though the church were not a passage to the light of heaven but to subterraneous and hopeless chasms. Svirski was astonished that the Renaiss-

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ance had not reformed the symbol of death. If death were not an eternal silence, and would be able to complain, it would say, "Why do people represent me by the figure of a skeleton? The skeleton is precisely the thing for which I do not wish."

Therefore, in Svirski's picture, the genius of sleep was gently offering the body of a girl to the genius of death, who, bending over her, softly blew out the flame of a small lamp burning above her head. While painting, Svirski repeated to himself, "It is necessary that the man who looks at it should say to himself before all, 'Ah! how quiet it is!'" And he wanted this silence to flow over the spectators from the lines, from the figure, from the expression, from the colouring. He thought also that were he able to produce this impression, and if the picture could explain itself, it would become a remarkable work.

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But there was something more he cared about. Following the stream of time, he agreed that painting must avoid literary ideas; he understood, however, that there is a great difference between giving up literary ideas and thoughtless reproduction of the exterior world as a photographic plate reproduces it. Shape, colour, position—nothing more! as if the duty of a painter were to kill in himself the thinking being! And he remembered that every time he saw, for instance, the pictures of English painters, he was struck before all with the high intellectual level of those artists. One could see from their canvases that they were masters of high spiritual culture, very much developed psychically, thinking deeply, often great students. He had seen something quite different in Poles. With several exceptions, the majority of them were capable men, but thoughtless, very little

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developed, and bare of education. They lived on old doctrinarian crumbs falling from French tables, not admitting for a moment that one can say anything original about art, to create it in the Polish way. It was clear to Svirski that the doctrine allowing them lack of thought was welcome to them. To be called an artist, but in the meanwhile to be a clown as far as the soul was concerned, was a very comfortable thing. To read, to know, to think — to the deuce with such aspirations!

Svirski believed that if even a landscape is a state of the soul, it is necessary that this soul should not be the soul of a peasant, but subtle, impressive, developed, worked out. He discussed passionately and quarrelled about that with his comrades. "I don't ask of you," he shouted, "that you paint as well as do Frenchmen, Englishmen or Spaniards. I want you to paint better. Before all, in your own way. And the

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one who does not strive to be original ought to become a shoemaker!"

And he tried to prove that it does not matter whether a picture represents a stack of hay, or hens scratching in a barnyard, or potatoes in a field, or horses in a pasture, or a corner of still water in a pond, the principal thing dominating everything in it must be the soul. Therefore, in his paintings he tried to put as much of his soul as he could, the last of his works being "Hypnos and Thanatos."

The two genii were almost finished, but there were some difficulties with the girl's head. Svirski understood that she must not only be beautiful but full of individuality. There were plenty of pretty models, but they did not possess enough personality. It is true that the woman from whom he rented his studio promised him to search for a good model; but she was very slow. A new model had promised

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to come that morning, but had not yet put in an appearance, although it was already half-past eleven.

These things, with last night's matrimonial proposition, caused Svirski to be greatly disturbed, not only about his peace of mind, but also about his artistic future in general and about his picture in particular. At that moment Hypnos appeared to him heavy, Thanatos stupid. At last he said to himself that, as long as he was unable to set to work, it would be better to go to the shore, where the view of the water and the sun would brighten his feelings and outlook on the world.

But just at that moment, as he was ready to go out, the bell was heard in the antechamber, then two Scotch tartans, two bangs, and the two bird-like heads of Romulus and Remus appeared in the studio. Kresovich, paler and gloomier than ever, followed them.

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“Good-morning, sir! Good-morning, sir!” shouted both boys. “*Maman* sent you these roses and begs you to come to luncheon.”

Then they began to walk round and inspect the studio. They were very much surprised at the nude sketches; they stopped before them and elbowed each other.

“*Tiens!*”

“*Regarde!*”

It made Svirski angry, and he said, looking at his watch,—

“We must be going if we wish to be in time for luncheon.”

He took his hat, and they went out. As there were no carriages near the studio they walked; the artist asked Kresovich,—

“Well, how are your pupils?”

Kresovich turned to him, his ironical face full of hatred, and answered,—

“My pupils? They are all right. They are as healthy as fish; they look

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well in their Scotch dresses, but I don't care much about them."

"Why?"

"Because I am going to leave to-morrow."

"What is the matter?" asked Svirski, with some astonishment. "I did not know. It's a pity!"

"Not for them," answered Kresovich.

"It must be because they cannot understand you."

"They never will be able to understand—neither to-day nor any other time!—never!"

"I hope time will prove that you are mistaken," answered Svirski, dryly. "At any rate, I am sorry to hear it."

But the student went on about himself.

"Yes, it's a pity; but it's a pity to waste time. They don't need me and I don't need them. They will be such as they will be. The person who wishes to sow wheat must plough the

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soil, and the poorer it is the easier to plough it. One could say much about it; but it's not worth while, especially for me. Microbes will eat me up just the same."

"You were never threatened with consumption? Mrs Elzen asked a doctor about your health, and he assured her that there was no danger."

"To be sure, there is no danger; besides, I discovered a sure remedy against microbes."

"What remedy have you discovered?"

"It will be published in the papers. One does not hide such discoveries under a bushel."

Svirski looked at Kresovich as if he would ascertain whether he had a fever; but at that moment they arrived at the station, which was swarming with people.

The Nicean guests were going as usual, in the morning, to Monte Carlo. While Svirski was purchasing the

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tickets, Viadrovski perceived him and approached.

“Good - morning!” said he. “To Monte Carlo?”

“Yes. Have you your ticket already?”

“I have a season ticket. We shall be crowded in the train. It’s a regular exodus, isn’t it? And everybody carries the widow’s mite. Good-morning, Mr Kresovich. What do you say about life here? Make some remark from the point of view of your party.”

Kresovich began to blink his eyes as if he could not understand what they wanted of him; then he said,—

“I have joined the party of silent people.”

“I know, I know! Splendid party! The company is either silent or it explodes.”

And he began to laugh.

The bell for departure had rung and they were obliged to hasten. The shouting, “*En voiture! En voiture!*”

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was deafening. In a moment Svirski, Kresovich, Viadrovski and the two boys were in the train.

"Look!" said Viadrovski. "We can't even dream about a seat. A true immigration."

In fact, there was a large crowd of every nationality — Poles, Russians, Englishmen, Frenchmen, Germans — all were going to conquer the bank which every day repulsed and broke the crowds, as a rock breaks the waves of the sea. There were numerous women over-scented with heliotrope. The sun lighted the artificial flowers on their hats, velvet, lace, artificial or real jewels, objects shining like polished armour on round bosoms, blackened eyebrows, faces covered with powder and animated with the hope of enjoyment and gambling. The most experienced eye was unable to distinguish the woman with a past from the society woman. The men, with violets in their

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buttonholes, looked at those women inquisitively and impertinently, inspecting their dresses, shoulders, faces and hips with blood as cold as one looks on things exhibited for sale in shop windows. Haste and disorder were in the crowd. At certain moments the train rushed into the darkness of a tunnel ; then again the sunlight, the sky, the sea, the palms, the olive trees, the villas were reflected through the windows, and a moment after the darkness again covered everything. The stations passed one after another rapidly. New crowds of people squeezed into the train. They were all elegantly dressed, refined, as though going to some great and joyful festival.

“What a true picture of life !” said Viadrovski.

“What is a true picture ?”

“The train—I could philosophise about it until luncheon, but as I prefer to philosophise after eating, perhaps you will be willing to eat it with me.”

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"No," said Svirski, "you must excuse me; I am invited by Mrs Elzen."

"In that case I retreat!"

And he began to laugh. The thought that Svirski might marry Mrs Elzen did not enter his mind even for a moment. He was sure that the painter only cared for her the same as the others did, but being a great admirer of artists in general, and Svirski in particular, he was pleased that he was ahead of his competitors in her favour.

"I represent the wealth," he was thinking, "Porecki title, the young Kladzki the youth, and De Sinten the world of fashionable, stupid chaps. All that, especially here, carries a great weight, and this woman has chosen him. At any rate, she has fine taste."

And, looking at the painter, he began to mutter,—

"Jo triumphe, tu moraris aureos currus."

"What do you say?" asked Svirski,

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who did not hear well on account of the noise of the train.

"Nothing. Some hiccoughs from Horatius. I say, as you refuse, I will give a consolation luncheon to myself, De Sinten, Porecki and Kladzki."

"May I ask you for what you wish to be consoled?" asked Svirski, approaching swiftly and looking into his eyes almost threateningly.

"For the loss of your company," coolly answered Viadrovski. "Pray what did you suppose, my dear sir?"

Svirski bit his lips and said nothing. But he thought that the saying, "People conscious of guilt are always afraid of being detected," was right, for if he were going to marry an honest girl he never would suppose anyone speaking ironically could be thinking about her.

When they arrived, Mrs Elzen, fresh, young and beautiful, was waiting at the station. She had evidently just come, for she breathed deeply, and her face

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was flushed as with emotion. Therefore, when she stretched both her hands to Svirski, Viadrovski thought,—

“Yes! he has beaten us all. She appears to be really in love.” And he looked upon her almost with sympathy. In her white flannel dress, with shining eyes, she seemed to him, notwithstanding some powder on her face, as young and charming as ever. For a while he regretted he was not that happy mortal whom she came to greet; and he thought that the method by which he had tried to gain her favour—which chiefly consisted in telling her hard things—was foolish. But he consoled himself with the reflection that he could laugh at De Sinten and the others who were beaten.

After the greeting, Svirski thanked her for the roses, but she was listening with some embarrassment, looking from time to time at Viadrovski, as if she were ashamed of his hearing the thanks.

Viadrovski understood that it would

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be best for him at present to leave them. However, they went together in the lift to the heights on which the gambling-house and the gardens are situated. On the way Mrs Elzen entirely regained her self-possession.

“Let us have luncheon! Let us have luncheon!” she said joyfully. “I have an appetite like a whale.”

Viadrovski muttered that he would like to be Jonah, but he did not say so aloud, thinking that Svirski might seize him by the collar of his coat and throw him from the lift, as such a joke would deserve condign punishment.

In the garden he took leave of them and departed; but looking back, he perceived Mrs Elzen leaning on Svirski's arm and whispering something to him.

“They are speaking about dessert,” thought he.

But he was mistaken, because she, turning her charming face towards the painter, whispered,—

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“Does Viadrovski know?”

“No,” answered Svirski; “I only met him in the train.”

Having said this, he felt somewhat uneasy that Mrs Elzen should so soon speak of betrothals, and it flashed upon him that it would be necessary to tell everybody about their engagement; in the meanwhile her beauty and charms began to act upon him in such a way that he became courageous.

They had luncheon together with Romulus, Remus and Kresovich, who, during the whole time, did not say a word. After coffee, Mrs Elzen gave the boys permission to go with the young man in the direction of Rocca Brune, and then, turning to Svirski, she asked,—

“Do you prefer to take a walk, or a ride?”

“If you are not tired I prefer to walk,” he answered.

“Very well. I am not tired at all. But

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where shall we go? Would you like to look at the pigeon-shooting?"

"Willingly. But there we shall not be alone. I am sure De Sinten and young Kladzki are practising after lunch."

"Yes; but they will not bother us. When there is a question of pigeons they become blind and deaf to everything around them. Besides, let them see me with my great man."

And inclining her head she looked into his eyes, smiling.

"But perhaps the great man does not wish it?"

"On the contrary, let them see us," answered Svirski, raising her hand to his lips.

"Let us go, then."

"Very well."

And in a moment they were on the large stairs leading to the Shooting Club.

"What a light there is here, and how happy I am," said Mrs Elzen.

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Then, although there was nobody there, she asked him in a whisper,—

“And you?”

“My light is with me!” answered he, pressing her arm to his breast.

And they began to descend. Truly the day seemed to be brighter than ever; the air was golden and blue, the sea, in the distance, looked like *lapis lazuli*.

“Let us stop here,” said Mrs Elzen. “We can see the cages from here.”

From under their feet stretched a large green lawn, running out towards the sea. The cages with the pigeons were disposed upon it in a half-circle. Each moment one of them opened suddenly, the frightened bird flew out, then the shot resounded and the pigeon fell either on the grass or into the sea, where, on the waves, small boats with fishermen were expectantly waiting for the prey.

It sometimes happened, however, that the pigeon was missed; then it flew towards the sea, and, making a circle,

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returned, seeking shelter on the roof of the Casino.

"We cannot see who shoots from here," said Mrs Elzen, mirthfully. "Let us tell our fortune; if the first pigeon falls down we remain in Monte Carlo, if it flies away we will go to Italy."

"So be it," said Svirski. "There it is!"

In fact, the cage was opened, and at that moment the pigeon, as if stunned, remained on the spot. They forced the bird to fly by rolling a ball on the grass, and then the shot was heard. But the bird did not fall immediately. First he rose high in the air, then he flew direct for the sea, coming down gradually, as if wounded; finally he disappeared in the blaze of the sun.

"Maybe he fell down, maybe not. The future is uncertain," said Svirski, with a laugh.

But Mrs Elzen moved her lips like an angry child.

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"It's that horrid De Sinten," she said.
"I bet it was he. Let us go down."

And they descended nearer and nearer to the shooting-gallery. Mrs Elzen stopped at every shot. In her white dress, on the background of green, she looked like a statue.

"There is no other material that makes so pretty a drapery as flannel," said Svirski.

"Ah, you artists," answered the young woman.

And in her voice there was some anger, for she felt offended that at that moment Svirski should be thinking about draperies and different fabrics instead of her.

"Let us be going."

A few moments later they were in the shooting-gallery. De Sinten was the only one there whom they knew. He was shooting with some Hungarian count. Both were dressed in brown English coats, with caps of the same colour, Scotch

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stockings—both very *distingués*, and with faces as expressive as those of jackasses. But it was as Mrs Elzen said : De Sinten was so busy shooting that he did not notice them at first, and only after a long wait did he come forward to greet them.

“How is your luck?” asked the lady.

“I shall beat! I am sure to win!” Here he turned to Svirski. “Don’t you shoot?”

“I do; but not to-day.”

“As for me,” answered De Sinten, looking significantly at Mrs Elzen, “I am to-day *heureux au jeu!*”

They called him to the shooting.

“He wanted to say that he was unhappy in love,” said Svirski.

“Imbecile! Could it be different?”

But, notwithstanding her words, one could see by the face of the beautiful lady that she was not offended, that in Svirski’s presence they gave testimony to her charms.

It was not the last evidence that day.

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“I wished to ask you about something,” said Svirski, after a short silence; “but I could not do it in the presence of the children and Kresovich, who told me he was going to leave. Is it true?”

“It is true,” answered Mrs Elzen. “In the first place, I am not sure of his health. A few days ago I made him go and see a doctor, who informed me that he was not threatened with consumption; otherwise I would not keep him an hour. But at any rate he looks worse every day; he is whimsical, irritable, often unbearable. That’s the first reason. Then you know his tendencies, although I am sure they will not stick to Romulus and Remus. I bring up the boys in such a way that they would not care for the ideas of the red party. But I don’t wish them even to know that such principles exist—that they should meet with such hatred towards the class of people among whom they live. It was sufficient for me that

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you wished them to speak with somebody in their own language. It was almost a command for me. Of course they ought to know their own language. Now people are insisting upon it, and I agree they are right. But even in that question Kresovich is too self-opinionated."

"I shall miss him! He has certain wrinkles around the eyes which signify fanaticism; he has a most interesting face, although he is a very peculiar man."

"The painter is talking through you again," said Mrs Elzen, laughing.

But after a while she became more sober and even somewhat embarrassed.

"I have one reason more," she said. "It's unpleasant to speak about, but I must tell you, because with whom should I be sincere if not with my — great man, who is so dear and good, who is able to be indulgent in everything? Well, then, I noticed that Kresovich had lost his head and fallen in love with

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me, and under those circumstances he could not remain near me."

"What? This one also?" exclaimed Svirski.

"Yes," answered she, lowering her eyes.

And she tried to simulate that this confession was unpleasant to her, but all the same, as at De Sinten's words, a smile of satisfied self-love and womanly vanity passed over her face. Svirski noticed it, and an unpleasant, ugly feeling filled his heart.

"Then I am also struck by the epidemic," he said.

She looked at him for a while, and then said quietly,—

"Was that said by a jealous or an ungrateful man?"

But the painter answered evasively,—

"You are right. Kresovich ought to leave."

"I will pay him to-day."

Then they were silent. The Baron de

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Sinten and the Hungarian count's shooting was heard.

Svirski, however, could not pardon the smile he had noticed. "It is true," he said to himself, "that Mrs Elzen acted with Kresovich as she ought to, and that there is no reason to be irritated ;" but he was irritated all the same. Some time ago, at the beginning of their acquaintance, he had seen her riding on horseback ; she was at the head, followed by De Sinten, Kladzki, Porecki, Wilkibey and Waxford. This cavalcade made a very bad impression on Svirski, an impression of a kind of a beastly run of males after a female. The same picture now stood in his memory, and his impressionable, artistic nature suffered considerably. "Speaking truthfully," he said to himself, "everybody runs after her, and if I were to fall over some obstacle she would be reached by the next one !"

Mrs Elzen interrupted these reflections. She complained that she was cold stand-

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ing in the shade, and said she wished to warm herself in the sun.

“Let us go to the hotel—you can get your jacket,” said he.

They started to return to the upper terrace, but when half-way up the stairs she stopped suddenly.

“You are not satisfied with me,” said she. “Of what am I guilty? What have I done to annoy you?”

Svirski had become quieter while walking, and answered,—

“You must excuse an old crank. I beg your pardon.”

Mrs Elzen wanted to know by all means why he was sad, but she could not make him talk. Then, half seriously and half jokingly, she began to complain about artists. What strange and unbearable people they are! Shocked by any trifle, they shut their impressions within themselves, and then escape to their solitary studios. To-day she had noticed the painter in him three times.

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That was bad ! Therefore, for a punishment, this unbearable painter must stay with her until the evening to dinner.

But Svirski said he must return to Nice ; then he spoke to her of his troubles as an artist—about his difficulties in finding a model for “Dream and Death,” and about the hope of success he had in this picture.

“I see,” answered the young widow, smiling, “that I shall always have a frightful rival in art.”

“It’s not the rival,” answered Svirski. “It’s God, whom you will serve with me.”

The pretty lady frowned at last, but meanwhile they had arrived at the hotel.

That day Svirski went half-way to paradise, and left his pretty widow with thrills of delight in his bones, but with the conviction that only matrimony would open the gate to it. His brain having cooled, he was grateful to Mrs Elzen that she had inspired him with such a conviction.

CHAPTER · IV

THE RULING PASSION

MRS ELZEN, before she began to dress for dinner, called Kresovich, in order to pay him, which she did with a certain interest, anxious to know how he would bid her good-bye. She had seen so many commonplace people, who appeared as if cut out by the same tailor to the same measure, that this odd young fellow excited her curiosity ; and now, when he was about to part with a bleeding heart, he interested her a great deal more. She was sure that his passion would be shown in some way, and she even wished for it, promising to herself—not very sincerely, however, to stop it with a look or word if he should overstep certain bounds.

But Kresovich, when he entered her room, was cold and threatening, and his face was other than that of a person

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enamoured. Mrs Elzen, glancing at him, thought that Svirski, being an artist, was right in having noticed his head, which really had something exceptional in its form. The lines were iron-like, showing the will to be stronger than the intelligence, giving to the profile a certain degree of stubborn expression. Svirski had noticed for a long time that he was one of those men who, if they seize some idea, their faith will never be disturbed by scepticism, and never a doubt will shake their ability for action, because with a stubborn and strong character goes a certain narrowness of mind. Fanaticism flourishes in such a field. Mrs Elzen, notwithstanding her cleverness, was too superficial to be able to recognise that truth. Kresovich would have attracted her attention if he were an exceptionally good-looking man, but as he was not, she therefore, in the beginning, treated him like an ordinary object, and only Svirski had taught her to regard

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him differently. Just now she received him kindly, and, after having paid him, said, with a cold and indifferent voice, but with well-chosen words, that she was very sorry that on account of her departure from Monte Carlo she would be obliged to dismiss him.

Kresovich mechanically put the money into his pocket, and answered,—

“I told you myself yesterday that I did not wish to teach Romulus and Remus any longer.”

“Exactly—it comforts me!” she said, raising her head.

Evidently she wished, at least in the beginning, to hold the conversation in a ceremonious tone, and obliged Kresovich to speak in the same manner. But to look at him one could see that he had an unbending determination to tell everything he had to tell.

“You have paid me with good money,” said he; “you mustn’t now give me any counterfeit.”

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"What do you mean?"

"I mean this," he said vehemently; "that you neither dismiss me on account of your departure nor do I quit you for that reason. The cause is quite different, and you know it as well as I do."

"If I know it, it's probable I don't wish either to hear or to talk about it," said she, haughtily.

He advanced a step towards her, holding up a threatening hand.

"But you must hear it!" he said, emphatically. "In the first place, for this reason: in a moment I shall be gone away; then, on account of the other reason, about which you will learn to-morrow."

Mrs Elzen rose from her chair, and, with frowning eyebrows and in the theatrical pose of an offended queen, she said,—

"What do you mean?"

He approached nearer to her, until his face was only a few inches from

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hers, and began to talk with concentrated energy.

"It means that I ought to have hated you and the people with whom you associate, but I fell in love with you. It means that for you I committed a crime in my conscience, for which I shall punish myself. But precisely for this reason I have nothing to lose, and you must pay me for my wrong, otherwise something dreadful will happen."

Mrs Elzen was not frightened; she did not fear men at all. She was astonished, and at once uttered an exclamation of amazement.

"But he is a fine bird of prey, who may tear me into pieces!" For any woman, familiar with corruption, an adventure especially flattering to her womanly selfishness had a great charm. For all that her moral sense was not afraid of trifling. Had Kresovich beseeched her for one minute of happiness, for permission to kiss the edge of her

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dress with humility, with tears and on his knees, she would have ordered him to be thrown out. But this threatening and crazy man, who represented a sect about whose fearful energy they told dreadful stories in society, appeared to her demon-like—so different from other people, something so out of the ordinary, that she was simply in an ecstasy of delight. Her nerves were longing after something new. She thought if she resisted, the adventure might assume unforeseen dimensions and turn into a scandal, for the crazy man was evidently ready for anything.

Kresovich spoke further, breathing his warm respiration in her face.

“I love, and I have nothing to lose! I have lost my health and my future, and I committed a base action! I have nothing to lose! Do you understand? I don't care if ten or a hundred people rush here should you give the alarm. But you won't do it. After that I will

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go away and the secret will never be revealed—I swear !”

Mrs Elzen cared only to save appearances, which, with womanly hypocrisy, she tried to preserve—in order to deceive herself.

Therefore, turning towards him her eyes full of artificial light, she asked,—

“Do you wish to kill me ?”

“I want to be paid, but not with money !” he answered in a choked voice.

Then he became paler ; he seized her and hugged her. She defended herself, but she did it like a fainting woman, from whom fright has taken all consciousness and strength.

CHAPTER V

A NIGHT OF SPECULATION

WHEN Svirski arrived at Villa Franca he alighted from the carriage and went to the harbour, because the idea came to him to return to Nice by boat. He found a fisherman with whom he was acquainted, and who, being pleased to see a liberal customer again, agreed, with Ligurian boastfulness, to go with him "even to Corsica, though the sirocco should turn the bottom of the sea upwards."

This time it was only the question of a small trip, rendered quite easy because there was not the slightest wind. Svirski sat at the helm and they began to glide over the polished deep. After a while, having passed the luxurious private yachts, they approached the ironclads, whose quiet, enormous

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black bodies were outlined harshly and prominently in the southern sun. The deck of the *Formidable* was already decorated with multi-coloured lanterns for the morrow's ball, to which Svirski was invited. The sailors on board the monster looked like pigmies compared to the dimensions of the vessel. The iron sides of the man-of-war, the smokestacks, and masts, were all reflected in the transparent waters as in a mirror. From time to time a military boat, looking like a black worm, moving its feet regularly, passed among the iron-clads. Beyond the vessels was an empty space, where the boat in which Svirski sat rose and fell with a broad and gentle movement. They approached the high rocks to the right of the wharf, along which ran a grey, dusty road; further on was the parade ground, where the soldiers drilled and practised military manœuvres. Finally, having passed the cliff, around which the large

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sea waves splashed, they emerged on to the open water.

There is always a breeze outside of a seaport ; therefore the fisherman began to spread the sail, and Svirski, instead of directing the boat towards Nice, turned its head towards the sea. And as they proceeded straight forward, balanced by the waves, the sun went down. The rocks and the sea turned crimson. Everything around was tranquil, quiet, and so gigantic that the thought came to Svirski—How small and paltry was life compared with the infinity which surrounded him at that moment ! He felt as if he had left all his own and other people's affairs, and had gone far, far away. Mrs Elzen, Romulus, Remus, all acquaintances and the people swarming on the shore, full of life, uneasiness, mean ambition and low passions, all became smaller to him. And being a man accustomed to analyse his thoughts and impressions, he was

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afraid that, if he were really in love with Mrs Elzen, her image would not have been thus veiled, disturbed, diminished, and would never have disappeared. Svirski recollected how once, after the wedding to another of a woman with whom he was in love, he had left his country. For the first time then he saw Rome, Sicily, the sea, the shores of Africa, and none of those impressions could erase the image of the beloved woman. In the galleries, on the sea, and in the desert she was with him, and he felt everything through her, and everywhere he spoke to her as if she were present. The difference between those former years and to-day made him sad.

But the quietude of the evening and of the sea pacified him. They went so far that the coast began to disappear. Then the sun set, and the stars began to shine one after another. The dolphins, which like to swim around

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a boat in the twilight, broke the surface of the deep with their sharp backs, and disappeared, and everything was quiet. The surface of the water became smooth, and the sail hung flat. Finally the moon appeared from behind the mountains and bathed the sea with a greenish light as far as the limits of the horizon. A quiet, fair, southern night began.

Svirski wrapped himself in the fisherman's pelerine and began to think. "Everything that surrounds me is not only beautiful, but true also. Human life, if it is to be normal, must be grafted on the trunk of Nature, must grow from it as a branch grows from the tree and exists on the strength of the same laws. Then it will be true and moral, because, in fact, morality is nothing else than the harmony of life with the general laws of Nature. Here I am surrounded by simplicity and quietude ; I understand it only as an

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artist, for I do not have them in myself as a man, because my life as well as the life of those people among whom I live is far from Nature; it ceases to be governed by its laws, and has become a lie. Everything in us is artificial. We have lost even the sentiment of natural laws. Our relations are based on falsehood; we have crooked minds, sick souls and morbid passions. We deceive each other and ourselves, and finally no one is sure whether he really wishes that which he wants or whether he is able to do that which he wishes."

And at once, in the presence of the contrast of that night, of the infinity of the sea, of the stars, of the whole of Nature, of its peacefulness, simplicity and might, a sentiment of a gigantic lie in everyday relationships seized him. This love for Mrs Elzen appeared to him to be a lie, her relations to him a lie, to the children, to other men, to the world;

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this life on the sunny shore, the present, and his own future a lie, all a lie.

"It envelops me like a net," he thought, "and I don't know how to escape from it!" And, in fact, it was true, for if life is wholly a lie, then what shall one do? Return to Nature? Begin some kind of wild, half-peasant life? Break with people and turn reformer? Svirski felt that he was too old and too sceptical for that. For that it would be necessary to have Kresovich's dogmatism and feel the evil in order to get sufficient stimulant for reform and strength for the fight, and not look at it as an impression which may be weakened to-morrow.

Then another thought came to Svirski. One who does not feel strong enough to reform the world can escape from it for a certain time and rest. To-morrow he would be in Marseilles, and a couple of days later somewhere else—perhaps on the ocean, hundreds of miles from the shore, from sickly life, from its lies and

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humbug. In that way everything would be disentangled, or rather cut as with a knife.

And at one moment he was seized with such a desire to turn this thought into a deed that he ordered the boatman to return to Nice.

“An animal seeing he is in a net,” thought he, “before all tries to disentangle himself. It’s the first law, and it is in harmony with Nature, therefore it is moral. Mrs Elzen alone is not my net. It is everything taken together. But at the same time I feel that if I marry her I should espouse the life of a lie. Even, perhaps, it would not be her fault, but the necessity of things, and it is always permitted to escape from such situations.”

Here he began to imagine other states which he was going to meet in his flight—vast expanses of water and sand, unknown countries and peoples, the sincerity and truth of their primitive life, and finally

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the variety of incidents and the great difference between the future and present days.

"I deserved it a long time ago," he said to himself.

Then another thought came to his mind—a thought which may occur only to an artist—that when one "gives his *fiancée* the cold shake" and goes, for instance, to Paris, such a deed constitutes suitable groundwork for "bad literature," but if one escapes somewhere as far as the equator, where the pepper grows, the fact of escaping becomes smaller compared with the great distance—the act creates a different impression, looks more original, and is more fashionable.

"And I shall go," he thought, "deucedly far!"

In the meanwhile, Nice appeared to him in the form of a string of lights. In the middle of this string the building called "Jetée-Promenade" shone like a gigantic lantern. In proportion as the

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boat, propelled by the strong wind, approached the wharf, each of those lights changed into a fiery pillar shivering on the moving line of the shore. The sight of those lights made Svirski sober.

“The city!—and the life!” thought he. And at once all his previous projects began to disappear like nightmares born of the emptiness and the night. That which a while ago he considered right, easy and necessary to be executed, seemed to him now to be a fancy, bare of common sense, and even dishonest. “No matter what is life, one must be careful. One who has lived under its laws so long as I did must feel that he is obliged to respect those laws. It is not difficult to say to oneself, ‘I used them as long as they were useful to me, but the moment I am bothered I return to Nature.’”

Then he began to think deeply, not about general theories, but of Mrs Elzen.

“By what right should I leave her? If her life is artificial and false, if her

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past is not clear, I knew about it and was not obliged to propose. Now, I should be justified in breaking with her only if I had discovered in her some evil which she had concealed from me, or if in some way she were guilty toward me. But she is not guilty at all. She has been honest and sincere with me. At any rate, there is something in her which attracts me towards her, otherwise I would not have proposed. There are moments in which I feel that I am in love with her, and if sometimes doubts arise in me, why should she suffer for it? My flight would at least wrong her."

He understood that for a decent man to think about flight and to accomplish it were the two opposite extremes. He could only dream about it. Rather would he ask Mrs Elzen to give him back his word. But to escape the danger—it would be a thing unworthy of his personal character and his thoroughly civilised race. Finally, the thought that

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he would wrong Mrs Elzen filled him with sorrow, and she became dearer to him.

They reached the wharf, and in a few minutes landed. He paid the fisherman, took a cab, and ordered the coachman to drive him to his studio. In the street, amid the noise, he was again seized by a longing after solitude, after that infinity of the waters, after that tranquillity and that great God's truth from which he had departed a while before ; and when nearing the studio the following notion came to his mind.

"It is strange," he thought, "that I, who was so much afraid of women, and was distrustful of them, should finally select a woman who is able to arouse more troublesome impressions than all the rest put together."

Some kind of fatalism was in the whole affair, and without doubt Svirski would have found in that coincidence abundant material for reflection during the whole

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evening if not for the fact that, immediately after he entered the house, the servant handed him two letters. One contained an invitation to the ball on the *Formidable*; the other was from his landlady. She wrote him that she was going to Marseilles for a couple of days, and that she had found a model which ought to satisfy the most exquisite taste. The girl was coming on the morrow.

CHAPTER VI

A NEW MODEL

IN fact, the announced God's masterpiece came the next day at nine o'clock. Svirski was already dressed, waiting impatiently, and full of uneasiness. Happily, his fears proved to be vain ; the first glance satisfied him. The young girl was tall, very graceful, with a small head, delicate face, beautiful hair, long eyelashes and very fresh complexion. But Svirski was principally pleased that she had "her own face" and a great charm in its expression. "She has noble movements," thought he, "and if she is as well formed as she looks, then—Eurekà !"

He was also impressed by her timidity. It is true he knew that models sometimes imitate modesty, but he concluded that this one did not.

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"What is thy name, my good girl?"

"Maria Cervi."

"Art thou from Nice?"

"Yes, from Nice."

"Hast thou posed before?"

"No, sir."

"Experienced models know what is required of them; there is a great bother with fresh ones. Thou hast never posed in thy life?"

"No, sir."

"How didst thou get the idea to become a model?"

The girl hesitated for a moment and blushed.

"Madame Legrand told me that I should be able to earn some money that way."

"Yes, but thou art afraid. Why art thou afraid? I am not going to eat thee up! How much dost thou ask for a sitting?"

"Madame Legrand told me that you pay five francs."

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"Madame Legrand was mistaken. I pay ten francs."

The girl's face lighted up with joy, and she blushed still more.

"When shall I begin?" she asked with trembling voice.

"To-day—immediately!" said Svirski, pointing to the unfinished picture. "There is the screen; go and undress! Only to the waist. Thou wilt pose for the head, for the breast and part of the hips."

She turned her astonished face toward him, and her hands dropped slowly to her side.

"What do you mean, sir?" asked she, timidly, looking at him with frightened eyes.

He answered a little bit impatiently,—

"My dear girl, I understand that the first time it may be hard. But one is either a model or not. I need a head, a bust, and a part of the hips very badly—you understand? Then thou

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must know that there is nothing bad, and, before all, thou must think it over, and be quick, because if thou dost not wish to pose I shall be obliged to find someone else."

He spoke thus a little bit uneasily, because inwardly he wished her to stay, and if she did not he would be obliged to search for another. In the meanwhile there was a silence. The model became very pale, but after a while she went quietly behind the screen.

Svirski began to move the easels toward the window and place them properly, thinking, as he did so,—

"She will get used to it, and in a week will laugh at her scruples."

Then he placed a sofa, on which the model was to lie down, picked up his brushes and became impatient.

"Well, art thou ready?"

Silence.

"Answer! What a joke!"

From behind the screen was heard

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a voice vibrating with an entreating supplication.

"Sir, I thought that—there is great misery in our house, but that way—I—can't! If you would be so kind as to let me pose only for my head—even for three francs, even for two—if you would be so kind."

And the words changed into sobbing.

Svirski turned toward the screen, dropped his brushes and opened his mouth. He was astonished, for the model spoke in his own language.

"So you are a Polish girl?" said he, finally; and he forgot that by accident he had used "thou" in speaking to her.

"Yes, sir! It is—my father was an Italian, but my grandfather was a Pole."

There was silence again. Svirski regained his self-possession and said,—

"Dress yourself again. You shall pose only for the head."

But evidently she had not even begun

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to undress, for she came from behind the screen immediately, bashful and confused, full of fright, and with traces of tears on her cheeks.

"Thank you, sir," she said. "You are—you must excuse me, but—"

"Be quiet," interrupted Svirski. "Here is a chair! be quiet. You will pose for the head. To the deuce! I did not wish to insult you. Do you see this picture? I needed a model to paint this figure. But as long as you can't stand it, that's different, especially as you are a countrywoman."

The tears began to flow again, but her blue eyes looked at him with gratitude. He found a bottle of wine, poured some into a glass, and handing it to her, said,—

"You must drink. I have some crackers somewhere, but the deuce knows where they are. Pray be quiet."

Speaking thus, he looked at her with honest sympathy.

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"Poor child!" said he.

Then he put the easel in its former place, saying,—

"You can't pose to-day; you are too excited. We shall begin to-morrow. Let us talk to-day. Who could suppose Maria Cervi to be a Polish lady? You said your grandfather was a Pole. Is he living?"

"He is living, but for two years he has been unable to walk."

"What is his name?"

"Orysiewich," answered she, pronouncing it with a foreign accent.

"I know the name. How long since he left the country?"

"Grandpa has not been in Poland for sixty-five years. He served in the Italian army, then in a bank in Nice."

"How old is he?"

"Grandpa is ninety."

"Your father's name was Cervi?"

"Yes. Papa came from Nice, but he also served in the Italian army."

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"How long since he died?"

"Five years ago."

"Is your mother living?"

"My mother is living. We live together in Old Nice."

"That's right," said Svirski. "One question more. Does your mother know that you wished to become a model?"

The girl answered with hesitation,—

"No. Mother doesn't know it. Madame Legrand told me that in that way I could earn five francs a day, and as we are poor—very poor—therefore I was obliged."

With a quick glance Svirski took in the girl from her feet to the top of her head, and he knew she was speaking the truth. Everything spoke of poverty, from her hat and the old, worn-out, faded dress, of which one could see every thread of its texture, to the gloves, which were much mended and grown rusty.

"You had better go home now,"

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said he, "and tell your mother that the painter Svirski wishes you to pose for him for a head. Tell her also that the painter will call at your house in order to beg her to accompany you to his studio when you come to pose, and that he will pay you ten francs a day."

Miss Cervi thanked him with tears in her eyes. And he, noticing her confusion, said,—

"I shall be there within an hour. You seem to be an honest girl. You must trust me. I am a little bit of a bear, but I can understand many things. Ah! one thing! I will not give you money now, for you would be obliged to explain how you got it, but I will bring and advance to you what is necessary. I have sometimes been hard up myself, and I know what a quick help means. Don't thank me! Good-bye, child—in an hour!"

And having asked her address, he conducted her downstairs. An hour

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later he took a carriage and told the coachman to drive him to Old Nice. All that had happened seemed so strange that he could think of nothing else. In the meanwhile, he was satisfied, as an honest man is satisfied when he has acted as he should toward himself and another who was deserving of kindness.

"If Miss Cervi is not a good and honest girl," he thought, "then I am the biggest ass in the whole of Liguria."

But he did not admit that it was possible. On the contrary, he was sure that he had met a very honest, womanly soul, and he was pleased that this soul was placed in such a young and beautiful body.

At last the carriage stopped before an old and weather-beaten house. The housekeeper contemptuously showed Svirski to Mrs Cervi's apartments.

"A swelling of misery!" thought the painter, mounting the dirty stairs. He rapped at the door.

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“Come in!” said a voice within.

Svirski entered. He was welcomed by a woman about forty years of age, dressed in black; she was thin, sad, evidently broken in health, but having nothing vulgar in her manner. Beside her stood Miss Cervi.

“I know all about it, and I thank you from my heart and soul!” said Mrs Cervi. “May God reward and bless you!”

Speaking thus, she seized his hand and bent her head as if she wished to kiss it. But he withdrew it quickly, and then, wishing to break the solemnity of the moment, he turned to Miss Cervi, and, threatening her with his finger, said, with the freedom of an old friend,—

“Ah! this young person told you everything!” Miss Cervi, instead of answering, smiled at him, a little bit sadly and with embarrassment. She seemed to him more beautiful now than

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she had been in the studio. He noticed also that she had around her neck a pink ribbon, which she had not worn before. He was flattered, as it was a proof that she did not consider him an old man, and had dressed to please him.

In the meanwhile, Mrs Cervi said, "Yes, Maria told me everything. God has watched over her and over us, and He helped her to meet such a good man as you are."

To this Svirski said,—

"Miss Cervi spoke to me about the poverty in which you are living, but pray, believe me that it is a blessing, even in hard circumstances, to have such a daughter."

"Yes," quietly answered Mrs Cervi.

"As for me, I am glad to have met you, because I was searching in vain. Now I am easy about my picture. Only I must assure myself about my model."

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And speaking thus, he took three hundred francs from his pocket-book and begged Mrs Cervi to accept it, assuring her that he was doing a splendid business, and, thanks to Miss Cervi, he would get lots of money for his picture. And then he expressed a desire to meet "grandpa," because he was always fond of old soldiers.

Miss Cervi rushed into the second room; in a few moments the sound of a chair on wheels was heard, and the grandfather, whom they had dressed, in honour of the guest, in a uniform with all his military decorations received in Italy, was drawn into the room.

Svirski then perceived the small and wrinkled face of an old man, with snow-white moustache and hair; he had blue, widely-opened eyes, resembling those of a child.

"Grandpa," said Miss Cervi, bending down so that the old man could see her lips, and speaking precisely, slowly

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and loudly, "it's Mr Svirski, a countryman, an artist."

The old man turned his blue eyes toward him, looked at him and repeated,—

"Countryman? Yes! Countryman!"

Then he smiled, looked at his daughter and granddaughter, then again at Svirski; for a while he was searching for words; at last he asked, in an old and trembling voice,—

"And in the spring—what?"

Evidently he had some thought in his mind that he could not express. He bent his trembling head on the arm-chair, and looking at the window he smiled, repeating,—

"Yes, yes! It will be!"

"He is always that way!" said Miss Cervi.

Svirski looked at him with emotion, and Mrs Cervi began to talk about her father and husband. Both were in the war against Austria for the independence of Italy. They lived in Florence

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for some time, and returned to Nice only when Rome was taken. In Nice the younger comrade had married Orysiewich's daughter, and both got positions in a bank. Everything went smoothly till a few years ago Cervi was killed in a railway accident and Orysiewich lost his position on account of old age. From that time their hardships commenced, for their only source of livelihood was a pension of six hundred liras paid to the old man by the Italian Government. It was enough to preserve them from starvation, but not enough to live upon. Both women earned something by sewing and teaching; but in the summer, when everything became quiet in Nice, and one could not earn anything, their small resources were soon exhausted. For two years the old man had not walked; he was ill, and, being obliged to pay the doctor and buy medicine, they grew poorer and poorer.

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While listening, Svirski made two mental observations. In the first place, that Mrs Cervi spoke Polish worse than her daughter. Evidently the old man, during the campaign, had not devoted as much time to his daughter as he did afterwards to his granddaughter. But the other idea was more important to Svirski. He thought that this granddaughter, being such a beautiful girl, could in Nice, on that shore on which every year many millionaires were strolling, get plenty of gold, keep carriages, servants, and have a boudoir upholstered with satin, did she wish. But she wore an old dress, and a faded pink ribbon was her only luxury. There must be some force which preserved her from evil. "For this," Svirski said to himself, "two things are necessary—a pure nature and an honest bringing-up. There is no doubt that I have met both."

And he felt at ease among these people. He noticed also that poverty

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had not rubbed out the traces of good breeding and a certain refinement which comes from within and seems to be something natural. Both mother and daughter received him as a providential guest, but in their words and mien one could still notice the greater pleasure that they had met an honest man than because he had helped them.

It was possible that those three hundred francs spared the family many sorrows and humiliations, but he felt, just the same, that both women were more grateful to him that in the studio he had acted like a man with a good and tender heart who had understood the girl's grief, modesty and sacrifice. But he was most pleased when he noticed that in Miss Cervi's bashfulness, in her charming looks, there was that embarrassment which a girl only feels in the presence of a man towards whom she feels gratitude, and who, in the meanwhile, according to Svirski's own ex-

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pression, "is still in circulation." He was forty-five years old, and notwithstanding a young heart, he began to doubt himself; therefore that pink ribbon and his observation caused him real pleasure. And he talked to them with as much respect and attention as if they were ladies of the best society, and seeing this, they appreciated his behaviour towards them. He shook hands with them both, and when Miss Cervi, with drooping eyes, gave him the whole strength of her warm and young hand, he became a little bit dizzy, and his head was so filled with the pretty model that the coachman was obliged to ask him twice where he wished to go.

While in the carriage he thought that it would not be proper to paint Miss Cervi's head on some other girl's body; and he tried to persuade himself that it would be better to cover the bust of the sleeping girl with a light drapery.

"When I return I will call any model ;

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I will cover her and make such changes that to-morrow the thing may be found ready," said he to himself.

Then he thought that he would not be able to hire Miss Cervi for ever, and he was sorry for it.

The carriage stopped before the studio. Svirski paid the driver and stepped out.

"There is a telegram for you, sir," said the housekeeper to him.

The painter awoke as from a dream.

"Ah!" said he; "very well, give it to me."

And having taken the telegram from the housekeeper, he opened it impatiently. But as he glanced at it, astonishment and fright appeared on his face, for he read as follows:—

"Kresovich killed himself an hour ago. Come. HELENE."

CHAPTER VII

MRS ELZEN SHOWS HERSELF

WHEN Mrs Elzen met Svirski, her face looked confused and irritated, her eyes were dry but red, as if she had been crying, her manner was full of impatience.

"Have you received any letter?" she asked him hastily.

"No. I received only your telegram. What a misfortune!"

"I thought he had written to you."

"No. When did it happen?"

"This morning. They heard a shot in his room; the servants rushed in and found him dead."

"Here in the hotel?"

"No. Happily he went yesterday to Condamine."

"What is the cause of it?"

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"How can I know?" she answered impatiently.

"Because, as far as I know, he did not gamble."

"No. They found some money on him."

"Was it yesterday that you dismissed him?"

"Yes; but he asked me to do so."

"Perhaps he took it too seriously."

"I don't know," she said feverishly. "If he wanted to kill himself he ought to have gone away. But he was a madman—that explains everything! Why did he not go away?"

Svirski looked at her attentively.

"Calm yourself," said he.

But she misunderstood him and said,—

"Because it's very unpleasant for me, and then there might be some trouble! Who knows whether I may not be obliged to go to the court as a witness? How can I know? What a dreadful thing! And then there shall be some

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gossip. First Viadrovski. I wanted to ask you to say among your friends that he gambled and had lost my money, and that was the reason for his suicide. If you think it will be necessary to repeat it in court it will then be better not to speak about it, as it may come out that it is not true; but you can say it to people. If he had gone at least to Mentone or Nice! Then God knows whether he may not have written anything before death in order to avenge himself on me. If some letter should fall into the hands of a newspaper man! One may expect anything from this kind of people. I wanted to leave Nice, but now I *must*."

Svirski looked more and more attentively on her troubled face with closed lips; finally he said,—

"How horrid!"

"Yes, it *is* horrid!" answered Mrs Elzen. "Would it not increase the gossip if we leave to-morrow?"

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"I don't think so," said Svirski.

And he inquired about the hotel in which Kresovich shot himself, and said that he would go there to get some news and arrange for the funeral.

But she wanted to stop him, so he said,—

"Madam ! he is not a dog but a man ; and it's proper to bury him at least."

"Somebody will bury him without you," she answered.

Svirski took leave, however, and went out. On the stairs of the hotel he raised his hand to his forehead and repeated,—

"How horrid !"

He knew by experience how far human egotism can go ; he knew also that women, in egotism as well as in self-denial, overtop men ; he recollected that he had already met such types of womanhood among whom, under the exterior coat of varnish, the rough, animal-like egotism was hidden — in whom all moral instinct ended where

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the personal interest began. Mrs Elzen, however, was able to astonish him. "This unfortunate man," he said to himself, "was an instructor of her children; he used to live with her under the same roof, and was in love with her. And she? Not a word of sympathy, of pity! Nothing and nothing! She is angry with him for the trouble he has caused her, that he did not go far from the city, that he has spoiled the season for her, that they will talk about her; but she never thought to ask what was the matter with him, why he had killed himself, and had he not done it for her? And in her irritation she forgot that she betrayed herself, and that, if not on account of a womanly heart, at least on account of good sense, she ought to have shown me that she is better than that. Ah! what a spiritual barbarism! Appearances, appearances, that is all, and under a French corset and the

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French accent the primitive nature of a true Zulu woman! Civilisation applied to the skin like powder! Even she is impudent enough to ask me to tell people that he was gambling with her money! Pooh! May a thunderbolt strike all this business!"

Thus thinking and speaking, he reached Condamine and found the small hotel in which the suicide was committed. In Kresovich's room he found a physician and a police official, who were very glad he had come, because they thought he could give them some information about the dead man.

"He left a note," said the official, "asking to be buried in a common grave, and the money found with him to be sent to Zurich to an address given by him. He has burned all his papers."

Svirski looked at Kresovich, who was lying on the bed with opened, frightened eyes.

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"The dead man considered himself sick without any hope of recovery," said he; "that is probably the reason he committed suicide. He never gambled."

Then he said everything he knew about Kresovich, left money enough to purchase a separate grave, and went out.

While walking, he recollected what Kresovich said to him in Nice about microbes, also his answer, given to Viadrovski, that he had joined the society of "silent ones," and he convinced himself that the young student killed himself as he doubted whether he could ever be cured.

But he understood also that some secondary reasons might be admitted, and among them the unhappy love for Mrs Elzen and his parting from her. These thoughts made him sad. Kresovich's body, with the fright in its eyes, stood before him. He thought that no-

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body plunged into that fearful darkness without fright ; that the whole life, compared with the necessity of death, was one of gigantic, tragical nonsense, and he returned to Mrs Elzen very low-spirited.

She was relieved on learning that Kresovich had left no papers. She said that she would send the money necessary for a decent funeral, and now talked about him with a certain pity. But she could not make Svirski stay with her. The painter announced that he must go home.

"But I shall see you at least in the evening?" she said, shaking hands with him. "I wanted to go with you to Nice."

"What for?" asked Svirski, astonished.

"Have you forgotten? To the ball on board the *Formidable*."

"Ah ! you are going to the ball, then?"

"If you only knew how difficult it is to me, especially after such an unpleasant

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accident, you would pity me ; because, in fact, I am really sorry for the poor young man. But I must do it, if only for the reason that people may not have cause for scandal—or to think anything.”

“So ? Good-bye !” said Svirski.

And a few moments later, sitting in the train, he said to himself,—

“I’ll be a dead crab if I go with you to a ball on the *Formidable*, or any other ball !”

CHAPTER VIII

A NEW INTEREST IN LIFE

BUT the next day his sadness had passed when Mrs Cervi and her daughter came to his studio. Seeing the beautiful fresh face of the girl, he became even joyful.

In the studio everything was ready : the easel was placed near the window, the sofa for the use of the model not far from it. Madame Legrand received the most precise orders not to let anybody in, even if Queen Victoria herself should call.

Svirski drew the curtains and darkened the window in the ceiling ; but while doing so he looked continually at his gracious model. At the same time the ladies took off their hats and Miss Cervi asked,—

“ What shall I do now ? ”

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"You must first let your hair fall," said Svirski.

He approached her as she raised both hands to her head. It was apparent that his request made her uneasy, and that it seemed strange to her. And Svirski looked at her confused face, drooping eyes, bent figure, and the elegant lines of her hips, and thought that in this big pail of filth—Nice—he had discovered a true pearl.

After a while her fair, beautiful hair fell over her shoulders. Miss Cervi shook her head to dishevel it, and it covered her completely.

"*Corpo Dio!*" exclaimed Svirski. The more difficult task was to pose the model. Svirski noticed that the girl's heart beat quicker, that her breast heaved faster, and her cheeks burned as though she were obliged to fight against an instinctive bashfulness, with an uneasiness similar to that which causes one an unknown pleasure.

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Therefore he said to himself, "No, she is not a common model—she is quite different—and I am not looking at her simply as a painter would." In fact, he was embarrassed, and his fingers trembled as he was placing her head on a cushion ; but, wishing to dispel his agitation, he began to talk jokingly,—

"Keep quiet now ! That way ! One must do something for art. Now, that's well ! How beautiful your profile looks against the red ground ! If you could see it—but you can't ! Don't smile—it's forbidden. You must sleep ! I am going to paint immediately !"

And he began to work, but soon stopped and asked Mrs Cervi about past times. He learned from her that Maria had had a very good position in the house of some countess, daughter of a rich manufacturer from Lodz. But she dismissed her on learning that Maria's father and grandfather had served in the Italian army. It was very hard for

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them, because they both wished very much that Maria might become a reader with some lady living in Nice during the winter, and then they would not be obliged to separate.

The painter awakened in Svirski. He frowned, looked over the handle of his brush to the reclining girl, and painted diligently. From time to time he put aside the palette and brushes, approached the model, and corrected the position of her head. Then he bent over her more than was necessary for the interest of art, and when he felt the warmth of her young body, when he looked on her long eyelashes and the slightly opened mouth, a thrill ran through his bones, his fingers trembled nervously, and he said to himself inwardly,—

“Keep up, old man ! What the deuce ! Keep up !”

Surely he was getting quite fond of her. Her embarrassment, her blushes, her modesty, coupled with a certain

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virginal coquettishness, made him happy. All this proved to him that she did not consider him an old man. He felt that she liked him, too. Her grandfather surely had told her marvellous things about his countrymen, and maybe excited her imagination.

She doubtless thought she had now met one of them—not a common one—honest, famous, who appeared to her as in a fairy tale, at the moment of greatest need, with help and kindness. How could she help feeling sympathy for him and looking on him with gratitude?

All these things made the time pass very rapidly with Svirski, and he did not notice that it was already noon. But at twelve o'clock Miss Cervi said that they must go back, as they had left grandpa alone, and that they must serve him his luncheon. Svirski asked them to come in the afternoon. If they did not wish to leave the old man alone, perhaps they would ask someone to stay with him.

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Perhaps the housekeeper, or her husband, would do it. There is the question about the picture! Two sittings a day would be reciprocally useful. If it should be necessary to pay someone to watch the old man, he would consider it a favour if they would permit him to meet the expense—because, above all, he cared for the picture.

Two sittings a day for Miss Cervi was very good business, and considering the misery in the house, she could not refuse it. Therefore they agreed to come again at two o'clock. The happy Svirski determined to conduct them home.

At the door of the house the housekeeper handed to him a bunch of musk roses, telling him that they were brought by two lovely boys, and that they wished to enter the studio, but she did not let them in.

Svirski answered that she had acted wisely, and he gave the roses to Miss Cervi. In a few moments they were on

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the Promenade des Anglais. Nice seemed to Svirski to be prettier and more animated than ever. He enjoyed the noise, which before had always made him angry. They met Viadrovski and de Sinten, who stopped, having noticed the artist. He saluted them and passed; but while passing he noticed that De Sinten put his eyeglass to his eye, looked at Miss Cervi, and exclaimed with astonishment, "*Prrrristi!*" They both followed him for a while, but opposite the Jetée-Promenade Svirski took a carriage and conducted the ladies home.

The idea came to him to invite the whole family to luncheon, but he thought there would be a bother with the old man, and that, considering their short acquaintance, such a sudden invitation might surprise Mrs Cervi. Instead of that, he promised himself that when they could get someone to take care of the old man, in order to save time, he would have luncheon served in the

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studio. After leaving the ladies at the door, he rushed to the first restaurant he could see, and there he swallowed some food, hardly knowing what he was eating. Mrs Elzen, Romulus and Remus, the bunches of musk roses, all passed through his mind. A few days ago the beautiful widow and his intercourse with her were questions of great importance to him. He remembered well the inward fight he had undergone on the sea coming back from Villa Franca. Now he said to himself, "All that doesn't exist for me any longer, and I shall not think of it again." And he did not feel the slightest uneasiness or the smallest remorse. On the contrary, it seemed to him that some heavy burden had fallen from his shoulders. All his thoughts returned to Miss Cervi. She was in his eyes and in his head; in his imagination he saw her again with her dishevelled hair, closed eyes, and when he thought that in about an hour

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he would be able to touch her temples with his fingers, to bend again over her, and feel the warmth of her young body, he was as intoxicated as though he had drunk wine, and he asked himself for the second time,—

“Well, what will become of you, old man?”

But when he got back to his studio he found Mrs Elzen's telegram,—“I am expecting you at six o'clock for dinner.” Svirski crumpled it and put it in his pocket, and when Mrs Cervi came with her daughter he had forgotten about it so completely that, after having finished his work, towards five o'clock, he began to ponder as to where he should go and dine, and he was quite distressed because he did not know what to do in the evening.

CHAPTER IX

A TRAGICAL FARCE

THE next day, when Madame Legrand brought the luncheon for three people, she said that an hour before those two lovely boys had been again, but this time with an elegantly-dressed lady.

"The lady wanted to see you, but I told her you had gone to Antibes."

"To Toulon! To Toulon!" answered the painter merrily.

The day following a letter came. Svirski did not read it at all. And it happened that day that, wishing to correct Miss Cervi's "position," he put his hands under her shoulders and lifted her so that their breasts touched and her breath bathed his face. She became very much confused, and he said to himself that if such a moment would

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only last long enough, it would be worth while to give his life for it.

In the evening he spoke to himself thus,—

“Your senses are working in you differently from what they did before, because this time your soul is with them—and all because she is a child who on this dunghill of Nice has remained pure. This time I am not deceiving myself—the reality speaks.”

And it seemed to him that he had a sweet dream.

Two days afterwards, he received another dispatch, which was given to him in the presence of both ladies.

He opened it rather unwillingly, glanced at it, and his face expressed confusion.

“You must excuse me, ladies,” he said, after a while. “I have received such news that I am obliged to be going immediately.”

“Nothing bad, I hope?” asked Mrs Cervi, solicitously.

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"No! no! But it may be that I shall not be able to be present for the afternoon sitting. At any rate, it will be ended to-day, and to-morrow I shall have peace."

Having said this, he took leave of them a bit feverishly but cordially, and a few moments later he was sitting in the carriage on the road to Monte Carlo.

As he passed the Jetée - Promenade he pulled out the dispatch and read it again. It was as follows:—

"I am waiting for you this afternoon. If you do not come by the four o'clock train, I know what I shall do.

"MORPHINE."

He was afraid of this signature, for he was under the influence of Kresovich's recent suicide.

"Who knows," said he to himself, "to what deed it may lead the woman—"

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if not in her offended love, then in her offended selfishness? I should not have acted as I have. It was a very easy matter to answer the first letter—and to break with her. One mustn't play with anyone, be he good or bad. This time I will break with her, but I must do it now, and not wait till four o'clock."

And he bade the coachman hasten. He tried to persuade himself that Mrs Elzen would not make any attempt on her life. But there were moments when he doubted whether her monstrous egotism, if offended, would not push her to commit some such dreadful deed.

He remembered that in her character there was a certain stubbornness, a certain determination and courage. It is true that the thought of her children should stop her; but will it stop her?

"Does she really care about those children? And thinking what might happen, his hair stood up on end. His

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conscience began to trouble him again, and a new fight commenced within him. Miss Cervi's picture passed before his eyes continually, arousing bitter sorrow.

"It is true," he repeated to himself, "that I am going to break my engagement, but I feel a great uneasiness. What shall I do if this bad, vain and revengeful woman should say to me, 'You or morphine?'"

And at the same time, apart from uneasiness and uncertainty, he felt disgusted, for it seemed to him that the question put in that way would be worthy of some false heroine belonging to "bad literature."

But what would it be if she should put it in that way? In society, especially in Nice, there are many women who belong to "bad literature."

Bothered by these thoughts, and amid clouds of grey dust, he arrived at last at Monte Carlo, and told the coachman

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to stop at the Hotel de Paris. Before he could alight, he perceived on the lawn Romulus and Remus playing ball. They rushed towards him.

“Good morning, sir!”

“Good morning!”

“Good morning! Is your mother in her room!”

“No. *Maman* has gone on horseback with Monsieur de Sinten.”

There was a silence.

“Ah! mamma went with Monsieur de Sinten!” repeated Svirski. “Very well!”

After a while he added,—

“It is true! She did not expect me before four o'clock!”

Suddenly he began to laugh.

“The drama is ended by a farce. I have forgotten—we are on the Riviera! What an ass I am!”

“Will you wait for *maman*?” asked Romulus.

“No. Boys, listen. Tell your mother that I came to bid her good-bye, and

In Monte Carlo

that I am sorry I did not see her, as I am going away to-day."

And he told the coachman to return to Nice.

In the evening he received a telegram with only one word in it—"Villain."

When he read it, it made him merry, because it was not signed "Morphine."

